



THE
CONNOISSEUR.

By Mr. T O W N,
CRITIC and CENSOR-GENERAL.

NUMBER LV.

THURSDAY, February 13, 1755.

— Nil obstat. Cōis tibi pænè videre est
Ut nudam, ne crure malo, ne sit pede turpi :
Metiri possis oculo latus. — —

HOR.



HERE once prevailed among us a sect called *The ADAMITES*, whose doctrine, like that of our present *Moravians*, was calculated to comfort the flesh as well as the spirit, and many things generally accounted indecent and immodest, were with them regarded as principles of religion. The chief article maintained by this sect was, that it was proper, like our great forefather *Adam*, to go naked ; and the profelytes to this faith came abroad in the public streets and open daylight without any cloathing. But this primitive simplicity did not agree with the notions of those degenerate days, and the *ADAMITES* were looked

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upon as an intolerable nuisance. Their religion, like all others, was soon attended with persecution; and some of the converts were dragged naked to the cart's tail, some set in the stocks, and others sent to *Bridewell*.

SINCE that remarkable period the male part of our species have been decently covered; but the female world has made several bold attempts to throw off the incumbrance of cloaths. Caps, handkerchiefs, tuckers, and modesty-pieces have been long discarded; and the ladies have continued every year to shed some other part of their dress as useless and unornamental. But these are only half assertions of the female rights and natural liberty, in comparison to the project, which, it is thought, will be ripe for execution by summer. A set of ladies of the first fashion have agreed to found a sect of

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who are to appear in public with no other covering than the original Fig-leaf. The primitive simplicity of appearance will be restored, and, though some may be censorious enough to imagine that their confidence arises from very different principles, it may very justly be said of our ladies of quality, as of our first parents before the fall, "They are naked, and are not ashamed."

My country readers, and all those who live at a distance from the polite world, may perhaps look upon this scheme as merely fantastical and imaginary; but nothing is more true. The milliners are at this time all very busy in making up artificial Fig-leaves, and adorning them according to the different fancies of the wearers. There is more taste displayed in contriving an elegant Fig-leaf, than has hitherto been exerted in forming a genteel sword-knot. Some have

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bunches of the gayest coloured ribbons dangling loosely from the stalk, others tassels of gold and silver-lace, and a few designed for ladies of the highest distinction bunches of diamonds. This and the *Pompon*, which it is said has been lately worn merely as a type of the Fig-leaf, will make up the common dress of the whole female world: but if ever the weather should be too severe for the ladies to appear (as *Bayes* expresses it) *in puris naturalibus*, they are to wear flesh-coloured silks with *Pompons* and Fig-leaves as usual.

THERE are perhaps persons who as they still retain some of the leaven of decency in their composition, will be startled at this project. I must own however that it does not appear to me to be in the least extraordinary or surprising: for considering the present dress of our women of fashion, there remains no further step to be taken except absolute nakedness. The stays and petticoat have been so unmercifully pruned and cut away in order to discover latent beauties, that if those of the present mode were to fall into the hands of our distant posterity they would conclude that the present race of women must have been a generation of pigmies; for they could never possibly conceive that they were of common size, and wore by way of dress any garments so little calculated either for use or ornament. If one might judge by appearances, the little modesty that is left in the polite world seems to be among the men; and one is almost tempted to look for the rakes, and persons of intrigue in the other sex. I was present a few nights ago at the representation of *The Chances*; and when I looked round the boxes and observed the loose dress of all the ladies, and the great relish with which they received the high-seasoned jests in that Comedy, I was almost apprehensive that the old story of the outrage of the *Romans* on the *Sabine* women would be inverted, and that the ladies would rise up, and commit a rape on the men.

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BUT notwithstanding all that may be said against this project for establishing nakedness, it is not without example. Among the *Hottentots*, a very wise and polite nation, the ladies at this day go quite naked, except a loose mantle thrown over their shoulders, and a short apron before instead of a Fig-leaf. It is also well known that the *Spartans* allowed their unmarried women to wear a sort of a loose robe, which at every motion discovered their charms through several openings contrived for that purpose. There would certainly be no harm in extending this liberty to the whole sex, and I am not in the least inclined to listen to the malignant insinuations that when a married woman endeavours to look particularly tempting, it is not merely to please her husband, but to captivate a gallant. It may perhaps be further objected that our Northern climate is too cold to strip in: but this little inconvenience is amply compensated by the security the ladies will create to themselves by taking such extraordinary liberties, and carrying matters so very far that it will be indecent even to reprehend them.

THERE is however a very large part of the sex, for whom I am greatly concerned on this occasion. I mean the Old and the Ugly. Whatever the Belles may get by this fashion, these poor ladies will be great sufferers. Their faces are already more than is agreeable to be shewn; but if they expose sickly skins furrowed and pursed up like a washer-woman's fingers, the sight will become too disgusting. During the present mode I have observed that the display of a yellow neck or clumsy leg has created but few admirers; and it is reasonable to conclude that when the new-fashion begins to prevail universally, altho' our men of pleasure will be glad to see the young and beautiful ladies, whom they would desire to take into their arms, stripping as fast as possible, yet they are not so fond of primitive and original simplicity,

simplicity as to be captivated by a lady who has none of the charms of *EVE*, except her nakedness.

SOME persons of more than ordinary penetration are apt to look on this project in a political light, and consider it as a scheme to counter-work the Marriage-Act. But as the chief ladies who concerted it are already provided with husbands, and are known to be very well affected to the Government, this does not appear probable. It is more likely to be an artifice of the Beauties to make their superiority incontestible, by drawing in the dowdies of the sex to suffer by such an injurious contrast. However this may be, it is very certain that the most lovely of the sex are about to employ the whole artillery of their charms against us, and indeed seem resolved to shoot us flying. On this occasion it is to be hoped that the practice of painting, which is now so very fashionable, will be entirely laid aside: for whoever incrusts herself in paint can never be allowed to be naked; and it is surely more elegant for a lady to be covered even with silk and linen, than to be daubed, like an old wall, with plaister and rough-cast.

AFTER this account of the schemes of our modish females now in agitation, which the reader may depend upon as genuine, it only remains to let him know how I came by my intelligence. *The PARLIAMENT OF WOMEN* lately proposed is now actually sitting. Upon their first meeting after the preliminaries were adjusted, the whole house naturally resolved itself into a Committee on the affairs of Drefs. The Fig-leaf Bill, the purport of which is contained in this paper, was brought in a by noble Countess, and occasioned some very warm debates. Two ladies in particular made several remarkable speeches on this occasion: but

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they were both imagined to speak, like our male patriots, more for their own private interest than for the good of the Public. For one of these ladies, who insisted very earnestly on the decency of some sort of covering, and has a very beautiful face, is shrewdly suspected not to be so much above all rivalry in the turn and proportion of her limbs: and the other, who was impatient to be undressed with all expedition, was thought to be too much influenced by her known partiality to a favourite mole, which now lays out of sight. The Bill however was passed by a very considerable majority, and is intended to be put in force by Midsummer Day next ensuing.

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Numb. L. *On Suicide, and the other Numbers which were out of print, are now reprinted, and may be had at the Publisher's.*